

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 505

By Hensley

A RESOLUTION to honor Columbia State Community College on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary.

WHEREAS, it is most fitting that the members of this General Assembly recognize the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Columbia State Community College, the first community college established in the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, in 1957, *Public Higher Education in Tennessee*, a study commonly referred to as the Pierce-Albright Report and a cornerstone in the history of Tennessee's community colleges, was completed and identified three areas that were underserved by higher education, including the south central Middle Tennessee region; and

WHEREAS, great interest in the report generated the formation of a Maury County committee, comprised of 600 citizens led by John W. Finney, editor of the *Columbia Daily Herald*, and Hardin Hill, a local engineer and civic leader, to pursue the establishment of a college in Columbia. The Maury County Quarterly Court pledged one million dollars toward development costs if the new college was located within twelve miles of the courthouse; and

WHEREAS, in 1963, Governor Frank G. Clement and Commissioner J. Howard Warf of the Tennessee Department of Education reached an agreement with the leaders of the Tennessee General Assembly on the development of new higher education institutions. The resulting legislation, Chapter 379 of the Public Acts of 1963, appropriated \$100,000 to the State Board of Education for the preliminary planning and establishment of "additional, regional-type institutions of higher learning"; and

WHEREAS, later that same year, a five-member committee of the State Board of Education was appointed to make preliminary plans for a state college to be located in south central Middle Tennessee, and a visit was made to Maury County to view prospective sites just

days before the federal Higher Education Facilities Act was approved, which established a grant program to assist with financing construction of two-year colleges; and

WHEREAS, in 1964, the committee, now known as the Committee for a Junior College in South-Central Tennessee, adopted a progress report that recognized the need for a multi-purpose college in the area and on December 17, 1964, adopted a landmark resolution for the establishment of three community-colleges, one in each grand division; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education approved the three community-college report recommendation in 1965 and, after a presentation from the Maury County committee later that same year, approved the locations of the first community colleges: Columbia, Cleveland, and Jackson; and

WHEREAS, on June 30, 1965, Commissioner Warf toured prospective sites and chose the 204-acre Hickman farm, located four miles west of downtown Columbia, as the future site of Columbia State Community College. The Maury County Quarterly Court purchased the Hickman farm and pledged an additional \$250,000 toward construction costs; and

WHEREAS, on October 20, 1965, a groundbreaking ceremony led by Governor Clement and Commissioner Warf signaled the start of construction of the college by Melson Contractors, Inc., who was awarded the contract with completion of the new campus scheduled for fall 1967; and

WHEREAS, in 1966, Dr. James Wesley Clark was appointed dean of instruction to provide leadership until a permanent president was hired as nine administrators and twenty-one faculty members were hired, temporary buildings were procured and readied for instruction, and classes were scheduled; and

WHEREAS, an initial student body of 363 registered for classes on September 23, 1966, and the first college convocation was held September 26, 1966, at the Polk Theatre in downtown Columbia with Governor Clement as the featured speaker; and

WHEREAS, classes at the new college were held in almost a dozen facilities in Columbia that first semester, including First Baptist Church and the lab facilities at Columbia

Military Academy, with the Memorial Building on West 7th Street serving as the student center as professors and other college employees transported students between the locations; and

WHEREAS, on March 15, 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson and First Lady Lady Bird Johnson visited Maury County for the official dedication of Columbia State Community College. First Lady Johnson unveiled the dedication plaque and stated that "when a Columbia Community College rises from a once empty field, the country expands not outward, but upward ... I am honored to dedicate this college – to dedicate it forever to the service of the people and the progress of our nation."; and

WHEREAS, September 1967 saw the completion of construction of the original campus in time for fall classes with the grand opening of an administration building, a classroom building, a student center, a gymnasium, a power building, and a library, which was subsequently dedicated to honor the memory of John W. Finney, who had worked tirelessly to bring the college to fruition; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Harold Pryor was named the first president of Columbia State Community College on February 9, 1968, and on June 7, 1968, forty-four students received their diplomas at a graduation ceremony in the new gymnasium to become the first graduates of Tennessee's first community college; and

WHEREAS, over the past fifty years, more than 103,500 students have enrolled and benefitted from Columbia State Community College, with more than 19,000 graduates having been awarded a certificate or a degree; and

WHEREAS, Columbia State Community College will celebrate a half-century of service to south central Middle Tennessee and this State on March 15, 2016, and it is most appropriate that this General Assembly recognize the institution on this special occasion; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Columbia State Community College on the celebration of fifty years of dedicated service to the State of Tennessee and its continuing commitment to excellence in higher education.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.